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MEMORIAL

OF

JOHN JOHNSON, JUNIOR.

APRIL 24, 1820.

Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the "*Bill to regulate the duties on imports and tonnage, and for other purposes.*"

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To the honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States :

The humble petition of John Johnson, Junr. respectfully sheweth : That your petitioner, in common with the iron founders throughout the United States, labors under a serious grievance, from the high duty imposed upon English pig iron, by the act of 1818. Many castings cannot be made good but of English pig iron. Sand castings, of every description, are greatly improved by mixing the English pig iron with the American, and the high duty upon this raw material, amounting almost to a prohibition, prevents the use of it; rendering our castings so very inferior to those made in England, that many mill-wrights prefer importing their own iron-work from Europe, to the manifest injury of American founders. Without English pig iron, the cylinders and other important parts of steam engines, will be of so inferior a quality, as must materially injure this branch of our manufactures. In this country the steam engine is essentially necessary to our inland commerce, and to our manufactories throughout the western states. It is more generally used to impel machinery than water powers. If, therefore, we continue to make them of American iron only, disappointment and ruin must be the consequence; and to succeed in the establishment of steam boats, mills, or manufactories, the undertakers must import castings from Europe, as they have already done, to a very great extent, in the southern states.

It may be necessary that your petitioner should explain the reasons of this difference in the qualities of American and English pig iron. Independently of the quality of the ore, the English iron is prepared with coaked pit coal, whereas the American iron is prepared with charred wood, which makes it approach the nature of malleable iron, and thereby renders it so hard to melt, that the intense heat required melts likewise the hearth-sand on which it is laid; the sand, in a state of fusion, incorporates itself with the iron, so that, when poured on a cold bed of sand, it hardens like steel; the extreme surface, from its hardness, does not yield to the contraction of the metal while cooling; the vacuum, thus occasioned, is filled with air, and the castings become honeycombed in the interior, and the surface very hard so as not to admit of boring or filing.

This difference is well known to the English founders, who import our pig iron to give hardness and strength to their castings, and to make bar iron. What would be said of the policy of Great Britain, were Parliament to lay a prohibitory duty on our iron, a proportion of which is so necessary to the improvement of English castings and bar iron? What would be thought of her political economy, were she to prohibit the importation of our sea island cotton because her own islands could supply the inferior qualities, and thereby force

their manufacturers to make up only inferior goods, and oblige her citizens to import fine muslins from France?

The price of American pig iron, in 1800, was thirty dollars per ton; military stores then began to be required; and, at the conclusion of the war, it had risen to sixty-five dollars per ton; and now, I believe, it is at forty-five! Surely, this price, at present, when, from the appreciation of moneys, all articles have nominally fallen in value, ought to content the miners; but, if the present high price on English pig iron be continued, the miners, whose interest only it was intended to promote, will be sufferers; for, it will be good economy in the manufacturers and steam-boat owners to import their castings from England, although at double the price of the American castings, rather than embark so large a capital in our imperfect machinery; and the consumption of American pig iron will be diminished. Your petitioner, aware, from the experience of eighteen years, that he could not make good castings without the free use of English pig iron, and desirous of giving satisfaction to his customers, paid, during the last year, fifteen hundred dollars in duties upon that article! The present prices will not defray this heavy additional expense, and, if the duty be not diminished, he will be forced to relinquish the use of it, and the quality of his castings be thereby considerably impaired.

Having shewn that this high duty is impolitic, oppressive, and injurious to the best interests of our country, your petitioner relies upon the justice and wisdom of the legislature; and, confident that Congress will, in this instance, manifest that liberal and enlightened policy which has heretofore characterised their measures, by reducing the present exorbitant duty upon an article so essentially necessary to the prosperity of our manufactories, as in duty bound will ever pray.

JOHN JOHNSON, jr.

January 10th, 1820.